

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CONTACT:** Tara Conner  
**PHONE:** (615) 741-8589

## **EASY PREY- HOW SCAM ARTISTS PICK THEIR VICTIMS**

NASHVILLE – State regulators see it again and again: people stripped of their life savings, their dignity, and their ability to trust others by a scam artist.

“It’s hard to see honest, trusting, hard-working people getting preyed upon by these scam artists, but it happens every day,” said Mary Clement, Director of Consumer Affairs for Tennessee. “The best way to avoid these scams is to become an educated and cautious consumer and investor.”

Scam artists often target seniors and people who are not sophisticated about business matters. Seniors are considered easy prey because they are usually polite, trusting, and are willing to listen to a salesperson who appears to take an interest in them. Seniors also are more likely to participate in sweepstakes and prize offers, and frequently are receptive to investment scams.

Scam artists often prey on people on fixed incomes or who are unemployed, because they know how desperately these people need to provide for their family and pay their bills. Because of that desperation, victims want to believe the scam artist’s promises, and often end up losing their life’s savings.

Scam artists often try to gain victims’ trust by appealing to religion, a shared ethnic heritage, or other affinity. In some cases, they find their victims by holding “seminars” on money management or other financial matters. Some have even held such seminars on church property in order to gain their victims’ trust.

“The best way to protect yourself is to be your own best advocate,” Director Clement said. “Research and ask questions of any person or group you are considering sending money to, even charitable organizations.”

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Division of Consumer Affairs at (615) 741-4737 or toll-free at 800-342-8385.

If someone is trying to interest you in an investment product that makes you suspicious, you can check with the Division of Securities as well, by calling toll free: 800-863-9117. They can tell you whether the sales person is a licensed broker or dealer, and whether the investment he’s selling has met state standards and is licensed.